

Monitoring Calf Care: Goals and Thresholds

1. Newborn care and feeding colostrum:

- Quarterly – draw blood from all heifer calves between 2 and 7 days of age on herd-check day.
- Goal for blood serum total protein is 90% 5.2 and greater, 80% 5.5 and greater.
- Quarterly – summarize the number of new navel infections requiring treatment.
- Goal for navel infections is less than 10%.

2. Colostrum collection and storage:

- Quarterly – collect “as-fed” sample of colostrum and culture for bacteria. For a collection procedure click [HERE](#). Or, paste this URL in your Internet browser:
<http://www.atticacows.com/library/newsletters/BacteriaQualityControlColostrumUK73N17.pdf>
- Goal is less than 5,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria.

3. Cleaning milk feeding equipment:

- Quarterly – collect rinse samples from (a) nursing bottle and nipple, (b) esophageal tube feeder, and (c) buckets used to store colostrum and milk replacer mixing and feeding. Culture samples for bacteria.

For a procedure to collect rinse samples click [HERE](#). Or, paste this URL in your Internet browser:
<http://www.atticacows.com/library/newsletters/BacteriaQualityControlRinseUK70N17.pdf>.

- **Goal is less than 5,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria.**
- **Quarterly – collect “as-fed” sample of milk replacer and culture for bacteria.**

For a procedure to collect milk/milk replacer samples click [HERE](http://www.atticacows.com/library/newsletters/MilkSamplingUK74R17.pdf). Or, paste this URL into your Internet browser: <http://www.atticacows.com/library/newsletters/MilkSamplingUK74R17.pdf>.

- **Goal is less than 1,000 cfu/ml of coliform or other enterotoxigenic bacteria.**

4. Calf growth rates:

- **Within the first three days of life, using a heart girth weight tape, estimate birth weights on calves. If a large number of calves are raised consider taping only part of them. If you have 30 to 50 calves on milk, just tape the even numbered calves. If you have 100 or more calves on milk, just tape the calves with numbers ending in either “0” or “5.”**
- **Using the same tape and person, estimate weaning weights of all calves taped at birth.**
- **Quarterly – summarize the amount of weight gained by these calves and estimate average daily gain.**
- **Goal is to double the calf birth weight by 60 days of age.**

Note: When estimating rates of gain some loss of accuracy is lost by assuming birth weights. In a study including over 1,000 heifer calves from 2 herds only two-thirds of the calves fell within a range of 9kg around the

average. That means that fully one-third of the calves had birth weights more than 4.5kg either below or above the average.